

LA VITA RUSTICA

Enjoy a taste of the real Italy
at these rough-luxe retreats



While native Italians have nonna's place in the country to use as a bolt hole, the rest of us will have to settle for the next best thing – chic, rural hotels, all with a genuine rustic flavour. Located in some of the most beautiful regions of the country, from Calabria in the south to Tuscany in the northwest, they offer an elegant charm that's as Italian as fine wine, fabulous food and effortless style.

An ancient village brought back to life is the setting for Tuscany's Hotel Monteverdi – an ambitious project to re-create traditional rustic living in the 21st century. Check out the Eremito Hotelito del Alma, a monastic-style retreat hidden away in Umbria. On the Adriatic coast, Puglia's Borgo Egnazia also takes village life as its cue, but upscaling it to make a five-star, family-friendly resort. Calabria's Praia Art Resort goes to the other extreme – low-key, laid-back and made for lazy days spent with family and friends. Molto bene!

Words/Steven Efstathiou and Paula Rodney

Hotel Monteverdi

Castiglioncello del Trinoro, Tuscany

The lowdown A boutique hotel and villas, sited in a 900-year-old village.

Best for Foodies with a passion for art and culture.

This may be one of the most beautiful Italian resorts you'll ever have the pleasure to visit, but it took good ol' American gusto to get Monteverdi up and running. Lawyer Michael L Cioffi came to the village to celebrate his birthday, staying at a restored villa. He was so impressed by its *molto autentico*-meets-minimalist design that he commissioned its creator, Ilaria Miani, to remodel one he bought nearby. Since then, he's acquired much of the village, converting its buildings into a hotel, villas and even an art gallery. The hotel itself has seven rooms, each dressed in luxe, rustic style, while its spa is fed from thermal springs. We enjoyed many a *passaggiata* around the village, taking in its award-winning Oriade restaurant, the wine bar in the piazza and its church, the venue for classical recitals. Calling what's been achieved here a renaissance doesn't do it justice...

Book it Double rooms from £512, including tax (monteverdituscany.com).



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE
Hotel Monteverdi's Infinity pool; the
bathrooms take their cue from local rustic
style; and oak beams meet plush furnishings
in one of the hotel's Signature Suites